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ABSTRACT

To gain insight into whether debate judges actually do treat impromptu speaking as miniextemporaneous speaking, a study compared the comments judges wrote to extemporaneous speakers with those they wrote to impromptu speakers during the first two rounds of a forensic tournament. Approximately 1,000 comments from 152 ballots (102 impromptu and 50 extemporaneous) were recorded and broken down into the following categories: (1) delivery, (2) specific analysis (content), (3) organization, (4) analysis (general), (5) introduction, (6) supporting material, (7) conclusion, (8) generally positive (related to encouragement for overall performance), (9) time allocation, and (10) miscellaneous. Results indicated that judges gave students similar if not nearly identical feedback for extemporaneous and impromptu speaking. Although judges balanced their comments among the various criteria for effective speech, if it is desirable for judges not to treat an impromptu event as a miniextemporaneous one, then they failed. However, it would be inappropriate to place all the blame on the judges when the national forensic committees have not proposed a clear distinction between the two types of events besides time limits. (JL)

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JUDGING CRITERIA FOR INTERCOLLEGIATE LIMITED PREPARATION SPEAKING EVENTS

by

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University of Nebraska
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In their 1981 study of speech contest judging of poetry readings, Janet K. Larsen and James J. Lewis emphasized the need for consistency among judges for individual events. Bemoaning the lack of published research in individual events, they state, "Contemporary individual event speech contests are designed to be educational. All too often, however, the contest experience leaves the participant more confused than educated due to inconsistent judging criticism."¹ Students may also become confused when the comments they receive on ballots are inconsistent with the way an event is defined by a tournament or forensic association.

This project not only begins to fill the vacuum of research that exists on the judging of original speaking events, but seeks to address the potential inconsistency a student might face when judges' comments conflict with rules.² In the limited preparation events, most tournaments try to distinguish impromptu speaking from extemporaneous speaking beyond the differing time constraints. For example, while the American Forensic Association requires the extemporaneous speaker to address one of "three topics in the general area of current events," it defines impromptu speaking as "an impromptu speech, serious in nature, with topic selection varied round by round," noting that "Topics shall be of a proverb nature."³ Furthermore, the National Forensic Association rules stress that impromptu "is not mini-extemp."⁴ If impromptu speaking is not mini-extemp as specified in the rules of both major forensic associations, then it should in some way be judged differently from extemporaneous speaking. To gain insight into whether or not judges actually do treat impromptu as

mini-extemp, the present study seeks to answer the research question "To what extent are the comments judges write to extemporaneous speakers similar to those they write to impromptu speakers?"

Other issues that must be explored in order to answer the central question include the following: What types of comments do judges make to speakers in each event? How many comments of each type per ballot do judges make? Of all of the comments made to a speaker in a particular event, what percentages of comments fall into each category? Do the proportions of comments in categories follow similar patterns in the two events?

Method

To answer the above questions, 1,048 comments from 152 ballots were analyzed. The sample of ballots was taken from the first two rounds of extemp and impromptu at the Cornhusker Forensic Tournament held at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln February 25-26, 1983. As 51 impromptu and 25 extemporaneous contestants entered the tournament, the sample contained 102 impromptu ballots and 50 extemporaneous ballots.

Upon reading the ballots, the number of comments were counted. A comment is defined as any sentence, phrase, or single word that provides some critique of the speaker's performance or advice for improvement. For example, "I don't think you can provide a strong analysis if you give a non-committal answer" and "Good!" both were counted as single comments because they both relayed a single message. On some occasions, a sentence con-

tained two clauses revealing different messages. For example, the sentence "You've talked about Reagan's control over the issue, but you should have focused on exactly what Reagan has done and what he hasn't done" was coded as two comments. While it praised the speaker for addressing the issue in the first clause it suggested the contestant improve how the issue was addressed in the second. However, sentences such as "Because of your humor, I was at ease" would be classified as one comment.

The comments were then broken down into content categories. An inductive method was used to generate these categories, with new categories created each time a comment appeared that did not appear in a previously encountered classification. The categories into which 95 per cent or more of the comments fell were used for statistical analysis, with the rest of the comments being placed into a miscellaneous category. The categories of comments post-analytically derived from the sample are defined as follows:

1. Delivery--any comment addressing any issue related to either physical or vocal delivery. Examples: "Your overall delivery was outstanding." "Good eye contact." "You had a pleasant voice." "The pace of your speech was refreshing."
2. Specific Analysis (Content)--Any comment addressing explicitly the quality of the way in which a speaker handled the content of the speech. Examples: "I didn't buy the sexist implications at the end at all," "Any ideas on the impact of that deprivation," and "I think you would have done well to discuss Adelman's possible appointment to the negotiating team," and "How does Reagan's budget cuts affect me?" NOT INCLUDED: "I was rather confused by your analysis throughout the speech."
3. Organization--Any comment related to the structure of the student's speech. Examples: "You might have placed the background information earlier in the speech," "Good transition from the introduction to the body of your speech," and "a lot of my confusion centered around your organization."

4. Analysis (General)--Any comment assessing the student's analysis but not referring to the specific content of the speech. "Your overall analysis was good" would fall into this category," along with "More concrete analysis needed earlier in your speech" and the like.
 5. Introduction--Any comment that focuses on the introduction of the speech. Examples: "Your intro was outstanding," "Good preview of your main points," and "Nice attention-getter."
 6. Supporting Material--Any comment questioning or applauding the student's sources and examples. Examples: "Good sources on the current economic problems," "You rely too much on U.S. News," and "You use many good personal examples here."
 7. Conclusion--Any comment related to the student's conclusion of a speech or closure. Examples: "Nice referring back to your introductory remarks in the conclusion" and "A summary at the end would be helpful."
 8. Generally positive--Any comment that offers encouragement to the student's overall performance as opposed to a specific aspect of performance. Usually the last comment on a good ballot, although it can be used to encourage anyone. Examples: "You are a marvelous speaker," "Good show!" and "Stick with it."
 9. Time allocation--Any comment that refers to the way a student used his or her time either before or while speaking. Examples: "You need to use more of your prep time," and "You need to spend more time on the second point."
- Miscellaneous--Any comment not focusing on any of the above areas. Examples: "Good word usage" (3 comments appeared on word usage), "Good humor" (3 comments appeared on humor) and "I wish you had stayed around for questions." (Comments on the question period of extemp appeared 5 times)

As the ballots were read and comments counted, all of the data were broken down further by event for comparative purposes. Two statistical analyses were performed on the data to determine to what extent the judges were making similar comments to contestants from one event to the other. First, the category totals for the two events were correlated using Pearson's r to determine the overall strength of the similarity in comment type from one event to the other. Second, for each comment category, the mean

number of comments per ballot for extemporaneous ballots was compared to the mean number of comments per ballot for impromptu using the ttest for statistical significance. The second measure enables us to ascertain whether judges place more emphasis on a particular judging criterion in either extemporaneous or impromptu speaking.

Results

Analysis of the ballots yielded the following breakdown of the 1,048 comments:

TYPE OF COMMENT	Extemp			EVENT Impromptu			Total Sample		
	#	#/bal.	%	#	#/bal.	%	#	#/bal.	%
Delivery	62	1.24	15.0	139	1.36	21.8	201	1.32	19.2
Specific Analysis	79	1.58	19.2	96	.94	15.0	175	1.15	16.7
Organization	61	1.22	14.8	94	.92	14.8	155	1.02	14.8
Analysis (General)	60	1.20	14.7	83	.81	13.0	143	.94	13.6
Introduction	51	1.02	12.4	79	.77	12.4	130	.86	12.4
Supporting Material	59	1.18	14.3	61	.60	9.5	120	.79	11.5
Conclusion	18	.36	4.3	37	.36	5.8	55	.36	5.2
Generally Positive	9	.18	2.2	16	.16	2.5	25	.16	2.4
Time Allocation	1	.02	0.01	8	.08	1.3	9	.06	0.9
Miscellaneous	11	.22	3.3	24	.24	3.8	35	.23	3.6
Total	411	8.22		637	6.24		1048	6.89	

The results indicate that judges are giving the students similar if not nearly identical feedback for extemp and impromptu speaking. Aside from delivery, supporting material, and specific analysis, the percentages of comments in each category of comment are remarkably similar from one event to another. In two categories (organization and introduction) judges allocated equal percentages of comments (14.8 per cent for organization and 12.4 per cent for introduction), and in yet another, conclusion, they commented the same number of times on the average per ballot

(.36).

From the averages and percentages above, it would appear that judges emphasized delivery slightly more often on their impromptu ballots (1.36 comments per ballot, 21.8 per cent of total comments) than they did on their extemporaneous ballots (1.24 comments per ballot, 15.0 per cent of total comments). On the other hand, judges stressed specific analysis and supporting material more in extemporaneous speaking.

While small differences exist in the percentages of comments in a few categories, the correlation analysis indicates the overall strength of the similarity in comments between the samples of extemporaneous and impromptu ballots. The Pearson correlation of the category totals was an extremely high .887, and was significant at the .001 level.

Although judges tended to comment more often on extemporaneous ballots (8.22 comments per ballot) than they did on impromptu ballots (6.24 comments per ballot), only in two of the categories were their average numbers of comments for extemp greater enough than the average numbers for impromptu to attain a statistical significance at the .05 level. Even where the difference in means was statistically significant (in specific analysis where $t=2.383$ with 150 degrees of freedom and in supporting material where $t=3.966$ with 150 degrees of freedom), much of the difference in the number of comments from one event to another can probably be explained by the fact that overall judges commented more often on extemp ballots than they did on impromptu ballots. While judges on the average tended to

both stress delivery more often on impromptu ballots and devote a greater proportion of their comments on impromptu ballots to delivery, the t-test showed that this difference was not statistically significant.

Discussion

From the results of the present study, five issues warrant our attention. First, the results show what judges are saying most often to the contestants on their ballots. Second, judges at the tournament tended to treat impromptu speaking as mini-extemp. Third, the results point to the need for judges to enforce the rules given for limited preparation events. Fourth, the outcomes of the ballot analysis must be taken in light of this study's limitations. Fifth, while the present study has its limitations, it has strengths that warrant further study into the area of judging criteria.

If it is considered desirable for judges to balance their comments among the various criteria for effective speech and to stress analysis and supporting material in extemp and impromptu, then the judges whose ballots were studied performed admirably. No one category contained more than 20 per cent of all comments for the total sample, and for the event samples, only the one category contained over that percentage. (delivery in impromptu, 21.8 per cent) Six categories of comments on extemp ballots and five categories on impromptu ballots each contained over 10 per cent of the comments within their respective samples. In terms of stressing analysis and supporting materials, the judges made more than 42 per cent of their comments in these areas.

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However, if it is desirable for judges not to treat impromptu as a mini-extemp event, then the judges "failed" miserably. The extremely high Pearson correlation and its significance indicates that the judges are treating impromptu as a mini-extemp event, contrary to the rules established by the national forensic associations. Nonetheless, not all of the blame for the inconsistency between feedback and rules can be placed on the judges. While both national tournaments suggest that extemporaneous and impromptu events differ along lines that go beyond the differing time constraints, neither tournament (which influences rules at every tournament wishing to be a qualifier) spells out what that difference is. N.F.A's rule stating that in im-promptu "contestants will receive short excerpts on general interest, political, economic, and social issues" belies its admonition that impromptu "is not mini-extemp." And while A.F.A stipulates that its impromptu topics be of a "proverb" rather than current events nature, none of its rules spell out any difference in how the student is to address a certain topic.

The national committees therefore need to decide first whether there need be any distinction between the events other than time constraints. If they decide that there need be no distinction but for time, then the rules should reflect that similarity, which the judges now seem to be "enforcing." Otherwise, should the committees decide that greater distinction should be made, they should then make explicit these distinctions in the rules so that the judges might know what they are enfor-

cing. If there is supposed to be any distinction in the way a student approaches the two events, it would appear that judges are not now recognizing that distinction. With clearer guidelines, the judges would be better able to give feedback to students more consistent with the rules those students are taught.

These implications should be taken in light of the following limitations. First, the sample was taken from one tournament and might therefore reflect a regional bias. Second, the ballots comprising the sample came from a limited number of judges. Third, the method of averaging did not eliminate or account for extreme cases. However, the number of comments studied was large enough to minimize the extreme case problem. Finally, the results are limited in that not all judges reflect in their comments to contestants all of the reasons--or even the important reasons--for their decisions.

On the other hand, the results are strengthened by three major factors. First, as two ballots for each slot in these events were studied, the cases came from ballots written to a wide range of students running the gamut of both speaking style and talent. Second, the categories were post-analytically derived. Finally, the extreme strength of the correlation between samples adds to the power of the findings.

From the ballots studied, then, there would appear to be a very strong similarity between the criteria judges use to assess extemp and impromptu speeches. Aside from discovering this apparent similarity, this study has contributed classificatory and comparatory systems that might be useful in future study of judging criteria for public speaking events. Particularly inter-

esting in terms of preparing students for nationals would be a study of possible regional biases in judging. In preparing students for the transition from high school to collegiate competition, a study comparing criteria used by high school and collegiate judges would be useful. Finally, projects such as the Larson and Lewis study of consistency between judges in interpretive speaking events could be carried out with respect to the public speaking events. Results of such studies could be useful if we are to leave our students more educated than confused as a result of their participation in forensics.

Notes

¹James J. Lewis and Janet K. Larsen, "Inter-rater Judge Agreement in Forensic Competition," Journal of the American Forensic Association 18 (Summer 1981), 9.

²A Survey of JAEA, QJS*, CM* and the regional speech journals revealed not a single study even remotely like the present study regarding original speaking events. There were some interpretation ballot studies among the convention papers surveyed, but none empirical. They were Stacey Cox, "Textual Considerations in Prose Interpretation," Bruce B. Manchester, "Teaching D.I.: Textual Considerations," and Bob Frank, "Competitive Interpretation of Poetry: Rhetoric Versus Poetic," each presented at the 1981 Speech Communication Association annual convention at Anaheim.

³American Forensic Association National Individual Events Tournament Invitation, 1981.

⁴National Forensic Association National Individual Events Tournament Invitation, 1981.

* QJS - Quarterly Journal of Speech
CM - Communication Monographs